

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SHB 1510

As of March 23, 2011

Title: An act relating to the assessment of students in state-funded full- day kindergarten classrooms.

Brief Description: Regarding an assessment of students in state-funded full-day kindergarten classrooms.

Sponsors: House Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Representatives Kagi, Maxwell and Kelley; by request of Superintendent of Public Instruction).

Brief History: Passed House: 3/02/11, 59-38.

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 3/23/11.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

Background: In 2009 the Legislature provided \$100,000 over the biennium, contingent on an equal match from private sources, for the Department of Early Learning (DEL) to work with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and others to identify and test a kindergarten assessment process and tools in geographically diverse school districts. During the fall of 2010, OSPI piloted the Washington Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills (WaKIDS). The pilot reached 2600 incoming kindergarteners who were in 115 classrooms around the state. The purpose of WaKIDS is to gather information about the child in order to better inform teacher instruction. DEL submitted a report to the Legislature on January 15, 2011. A final report will be available in the summer of 2011.

In 2009 the Legislature redefined the minimum instructional program of Basic Education to include 180 days of half-day kindergarten, to be phased in to 180 days of all-day kindergarten, beginning with schools with the highest poverty levels. Schools receiving funding for all-day kindergarten have to agree to program requirements, including providing at least 1000 hours of instruction, providing a rich curriculum, and having connections with community early learning programs and parents. In 2010 the Legislature directed that, effective September 1, 2011, funding to implement all-day kindergarten must be phased in until full statewide implementation is achieved in the 2017-18 school year.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Summary of Bill: Beginning with the 2012-13 school year, schools receiving all-day kindergarten support must agree to identify the skills, knowledge, and characteristics of kindergarten students at the beginning of the school year in order to support social-emotional, physical, and cognitive growth and development of individual children; support early learning provider and parent involvement; and inform instruction. Kindergarten teachers must administer WaKIDS, as directed by the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) in consultation with DEL, and report the results to SPI, who will share the results with the director of DEL.

Parents and guardians may excuse their students from participating in WaKIDS. WaKIDS must be available to schools on a voluntary basis at the beginning of the 2011-12 school year.

Before implementing WaKIDS, SPI and DEL must assure that a fairness and bias review of the assessment process has been conducted, including an opportunity for input from the Achievement Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee.

The bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on September 1, 2011, except for section 2, which takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which the bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: When kids arrive ready for kindergarten they are much less likely to either need special education and remediation or have to repeat a grade. Kindergarten transition is more valuable when students are assessed for their academic progress and teachers are inclined to develop realistic academic guidelines. Assessment tools hold everyone accountable. Some parents don't know what a child should know to be ready for kindergarten, and for other parents schools are a very scary place. But all parents want their children to have good education and a love of early learning, and WaKIDS will set students up to be successful learners. The best time to engage parents is in kindergarten; so that parents, students, and teachers are working together to identify a student's individual needs. WaKIDS establishes a partnership between preschool, K-12, parents, and teachers. We expect to receive \$100,000 from federal sources and \$400,000 from a private grant to offset the \$1.4 million fiscal note. Language could be added for a waiver for schools with their own assessment processes; these alternate processes could be used as comparisons. The Senate bill has clear instructional support language. This bill should include an emphasis on early literacy.

OTHER: Some school districts already have their own assessments. Thus, a waiver amendment would only apply to districts with assessments already in place. Gradually districts would become more consistent as they see how WaKIDS works.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Hannah Lidman, League of Education Voters; Joanne Hill, Sebrena Burr, parents; Bob Butts, OSPI; Ramona Hattendorf, PTA.

OTHER: Marie Sullivan, Washington State School Directors Association.